

A vote for climate is a vote for the future

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Body

On Thursday, there should be only one issue dominating the ballot box and that's the climate emergency. Whether it's affordability, housing or jobs, every other issue ties back to climate, the single greatest threat to human health and the economy.

Days ago, a vicious storm ripped through Ontario, leaving at least 10 people dead, homes and businesses damaged and hundreds of thousands without power. 2021 saw the worst wildfire season in Ontario history, while nearly 600 people died in B.C.'s heat dome and food crops withered in Prairie droughts.

Burning fossil fuels threatens our very survival on this planet, while the immediate costs of fossil fuel energy seeping into every aspect of life from homes to food to transportation, is making life unaffordable. Where is the government responsible to urgently get us off fossil fuels and on to cheaper renewable energy?

We can still turn around our "code red for humanity" - but only with the right government. So why did our current government cancel cap and trade, plus hundreds of green energy contracts, losing billions in revenue for all Ontarians?

Why did they drag the federal government to court only to lose the expensive fight they picked against a price on pollution, one of the best tools to fight climate change?

Why are they the only major party supporting unnecessary highways and urban sprawl, which will escalate the climate crisis and deadly air pollution, gutting our health and economy for generations? How do we know what to expect when the current governing party has no readily available clear election climate policy, has been conspicuously absent from so many pre-election debates and unresponsive to major citizens' groups? The past four years, Ontario hasn't even come close to meeting its fair share of emissions reductions.

In the midst of an election during a pandemic that just won't quit, a brutal war in Europe, housing shortages and skyrocketing prices everywhere, who has time for the environment? This might be a good time to make time.

Only massive, urgent global climate action can avert the unimaginable scenarios we are facing. This election is our chance to turn things around. No government has the right to ignore or greenwash the emergency. Politicians unable or unwilling to address the crisis need to step aside. Otherwise, voters must ensure they are not voted into office.

This will be an election like no other. We have barely a decade, only two election cycles remaining, to act on climate. The next government charts the course through the critical few remaining years to secure our intact future.

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There is still real hope if we act together immediately. COVID has shown our collective well-being is entirely interdependent. The climate crisis will not spare the people who tried, if others have not. There's never been more at stake to protect with our democratic voice.

Isn't that worth your vote?

Dr. Mili Roy a professor at the University of Toronto and an environmental activist.

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